

Deregulation often spurs competition through market mechanisms and thereby improves the value of products available to consumers. However, the proposed rule changes leading to deregulation of broadcast media ownership will benefit a few powerful interests at the expense of all Americans. Public ownership of the airwaves demands that the interests of the public be paramount; those interests are ill-served by consolidating media ownership. It has been argued that the viewpoints of the media owners are not necessarily reflected in programming on their stations. Two recent examples clearly belie this idea. First, Cumulus Media directed all 41 of its country music radio stations to remove music recorded by the 'Dixie Chicks' from their playlists after following comments made by one of the singers with which Cumulus Media disagreed. Second, the very rule changes proposed by the FCC have been poorly covered by the major media outlets who themselves advocate the change. As a result, the proposed rule changes have received little public scrutiny or comment, while polls show that people aware of the proposed rule changes generally oppose them. Indeed, opposition to the proposed rule changes cuts across political alignments as few issues do; groups as politically divergent as MoveOn and the National Rifle Association oppose the proposed rule for the same reason. Dissent is important, and the rule changes would limit dissent as they also would limit the interests, perspectives, and voices available to the public. I urge the FCC to vote down the proposed rule changes or, at minimum, delay a decision pending further public meetings and input.